

## Creative Menu Planning

Creative menu planning that involves children in food activities can give children positive experiences with healthy foods. Here are some tips for involving children in meal preparation, fun food activities, and stories about food.



### Menu Planning Tips

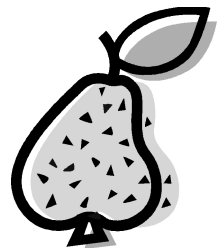
Menu planning is one of the most important jobs of food preparation. Careful planning ensures that meals are healthy, tasty, and eye appealing.

1. Offer a variety of foods. Plan to serve a variety of foods throughout the day and week. Be sure that the same foods are not offered too often.
2. Increase fiber and nutrients by including fresh vegetables, fruits, and whole-grain products. Include foods that provide vitamin A, vitamin C, and iron.
3. Limit fried foods, high fat foods, sweets, and high sodium foods.
4. Include a variety of shapes, colors, textures, and tastes.
5. Include some foods in each meal that children easily accept.
6. Introduce new foods to children alongside familiar, well-liked foods.

### Creative Ideas for Connecting Menus to Classroom Activities

Go beyond basic menu planning; use creative ideas to teach children about food and nutrition. Try the following ideas to connect menus to classroom activities.

1. Connect a menu item to a nutrition lesson.
2. Plan a food activity that allows children to participate in making a snack or meal component. See suggested ideas in the featured menus this month.
3. Use creative names for menu items. For example, when serving apples with peanut butter and raisins, the menu item can be called “apple smiles.” Ask children to create inventive names for menu items.
4. Talk about new foods presented in meals. When introducing new foods to children, ask children to tell what food group the food belongs to and how the food grows.
5. Discuss food groups represented in meals.
6. Teach students about nutrition using songs and games.
7. Read a children’s book that relates to a menu item to create interest in foods.
8. Use resources such as *More Than Mudpies* for new ideas (NFSMI, 2004).



# Mealtime Memo FOR CHILD CARE



## Breakfast Menus

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
French toast Peach slices Milk	Peach Muffin Squares- A-16A <sup>1</sup> Grapefruit sections Milk	Cream of wheat cereal Fresh strawberries Milk	Cheerios® cereal Banana slices <sup>2</sup> Milk	Scrambled eggs Whole grain English muffin Tomato juice Milk



## Lunch Menus

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Barbecued Beef or Pork on a Roll- F-08 <sup>1</sup> Carrots and peas Plums Milk	Tuna salad Whole grain crackers Lightly steamed carrot sticks Pineapple tidbits Milk	Baked fish Black eyed peas Green salad with shredded carrots <sup>3</sup> Cornbread Milk	Chicken Nuggets D-09B <sup>1</sup> Corn Whole wheat roll Diced pears Milk	Beef Burrito- D-21 <sup>1,4</sup> New potatoes Orange wedges Milk



## Snack Menus

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Watermelon chunks Whole grain crackers Water	Pineapple Scones- A-01 <sup>1</sup> Milk Water	String cheese Graham crackers Water	Lowfat yogurt Apricot halves Water	Peanut butter <sup>5</sup> Apple slices <sup>6</sup> Water

<sup>1</sup>USDA Recipes for Child Care. Available online at [www.nfsmi.org](http://www.nfsmi.org).

<sup>2</sup>Children can use plastic knives to cut half a banana into slices. Talk about bananas growing on trees and ask children to tell the food groups that are represented in their breakfast (fruit, grains, milk)..

<sup>3</sup>Children can participate in making salads by tearing lettuce. Read a book about vegetables growing on this day, such as *Oliver's Vegetables* by Vivian French.

<sup>4</sup>As an optional food activity, prepare the filling for the burrito and let it cool. Allow children to place filling in tortillas and roll them before placing them in a baking dish. Talk about the meal components in this dish (meat, grains/bread, vegetable).

<sup>5</sup>Sunflower butter can be substituted for peanut butter.

<sup>6</sup>Have children spread peanut butter on apple slices with a plastic knife. Children can also place raisins (optional) on the peanut butter. Remember that raisins can be a choking hazard for young children.

### Sources:

National Food Service Management Institute. (1997). *CARE Connection*. University, MS: Author.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Nutrition Service, & National Food Service Management Institute. (2005). *USDA Recipes for Child Care*. Retrieved December 28, 2007, from <http://www.nfsmi.org>

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This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service through a grant agreement with The University of Mississippi. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. The University of Mississippi is an EEO/AA/Title VI/Title IX/Section 504/ADA/ADEA Employer.

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